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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: HONDURAN ELECTIONS: INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANTS  
EXPRESS CONCERNS ABOUT SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL

REF: Tegucigalpa 2253 and previous

1. Summary: During an October 19 meeting with EmbOffs, USAID-financed international election consultants working with the Honduran Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) expressed concerns about the TSE's ability to properly conduct the Honduran general election to be held on November 27, 2005. However, the consultant said they still expected the elections to be held without major problems. End Summary.

2. During an October 19 meeting between PolOffs and AIDOffs, election consultants, and international donors at USAID in Tegucigalpa, five weeks before the general elections are to take place, Rafael Lopez Pintor, an IFES elections consultant assisting the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), expressed concern about the TSE's lack of institutional maturity and development despite the recent experience of conducting primary elections held on February 20. Lopez Pintor indicated that political gamesmanship between the parties is a key factor limiting the effectiveness of the TSE and its ability to make rapid decisions.

3. Lopez Pintor said he considers the TSE administratively weak and lacking necessary organizational resources to properly conduct the upcoming general election on November 27. Lopez Pintor stated that the TSE needs to focus on improving its organizational structure, documenting processes, strengthening internal management controls, and restructuring the data center's information management system. As an example, Lopez Pintor pointed out the liberal access unauthorized people had within the TSE workspace. However, for Lopez Pintor, the most alarming and critical issue is the unpreparedness of the data center. With the election coming on November 27, the data center has still not yet been able to fully purge February's primary election data. If this situation is not corrected by Election Day, there will be insufficient space to process general election data.

4. Lopez Pintor said he also considers it urgent to employ a contractor to spearhead a quick vote count program that would allow for the announcement of preliminary results of the presidential race on election night. Information technology, logistical, and other staff personnel have been identified, with the exception of the lead analyst, who would undertake a sampling analysis from over 1,600 polling stations. The majority of consultants working with the TSE agree with Lopez Pintor on the critical importance of a quick count effort. Some have suggested a candidate to undertake this particular task: Jose Alberto Murillo, Colombia's Election Registry Director.

5. The Organization of American States (OAS) principal elections consultant, Fernando Lezama, said that the national census of new and previously unregistered voters had been completed and included in the final election rolls that will be provided to local election monitors. Lezama further stated that voter domicile transfer requests (from one department to another) were completed with minor difficulties. The deadline for citizens to change their residency, or domicile, in order to cast a ballot in a particular location has expired.

6. PolOffs expressed concern to Lezama regarding the lack of controls at the National Registry of Persons (RNP), especially with regards to stolen identities. The Liberal Party has complained about irregularities with more than 10,000 forms where both the applicant's photograph was missing and where the applicant was not clear about his/her planned voting location. PolOffs urged the OAS consultant to be alert to the possibility of imposters attempting to use the RNP to obtain false identities for the purpose of electoral fraud.

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